

CHAPTER III: THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PROBE:
(August 23-31)

MILITARY ACTION

The Chinese Communist move which had led to the con-
sideration of the problem of the Offshore Islands at the
highest levels of the American Government and to the de-
cisions and action discussed in the previous chapter was
a sudden, intensive artillery fire barrage against the
Islands of the Quemoy complex on the 23rd of August, 1958.
The shelling began at 6:30 p.m. Some 40,000 shells were
fired during the day at Big and Little Quemoy and Erh-tan
and Ta-tan.*¹ Approximately 92 Chinese Nationalist sol-
diers were killed and 300 wounded. The principal target
of the initial bombardment was the GRC Quemoy defense
headquarters-area. At the time of the outbreak of the
bombardment a ceremony was in process to welcome Chinese
Nationalist Defense Minister Yu to Quemoy. The attack

*The Chinese Nationalist Defense Ministry announced the shelling and noted that it came from the vicinity of Amoy, but it did not reveal the number of casualties from the attack. Chinese Nationalist Read Admiral Lin said that the shelling might or might not be the prelude to an attack on Quemoy or a diversionary move for such a possibility on Matsu. He reported that the GRC retaliated with artillery fire.² It was not until September 1 that the Western press was able to report the rough estimate that 200 GRC soldiers had been killed or wounded in the first day of Chinese Communist artillery fire.³

barely missed wounding Yu and seriously wounded Major General Lin, Army Chief of Staff, and resulted in the deaths of three Deputy Generals of the Quemoy Defense Command.*

The precise timing of the initial bombardment was probably related to the welcoming ceremony for the Defense Minister in an effort to demoralize the garrison by killing the commander of the garrison and his deputies as well as the Chief of Staff of the Chinese Nationalist Army and the Chinese Nationalist Defense Minister. Because the attack was centered on the Defense Command Headquarters, most of the damage in addition to the military casualties was to the communications facilities of Quemoy. In addition to the firing on Big Quemoy Headquarters, some fire was directed against Little Quemoy and the Islands of Erh-tan and Ta-tan. The firing against the two smaller islands in the Quemoy group continued in the early hours of the 24th. Major artillery fire was not to be resumed

*In an effort to reduce the morale impact of the casualties to high military officers this information was very tightly held by Chinese Nationalist officials and reached the United States only through Intelligence sources.

again until the afternoon of the 24th at approximately the same time (i.e., 6:00 p.m., Taiwan time).⁴

In addition to the heavy artillery fire against Quemoy, eighteen rounds of propaganda shells were fired at Matsu. This was the first and last attack on Matsu during the crisis.⁵ Also on August 23 an air engagement took place in which eight Chinese Nationalist planes clashed with three Chinese Communist MIG's with no damage reported on either side. This was the first air engagement since August 14.⁶

The Chinese Communists began the use of torpedo boats on the first day of the crisis and brought about a near crash with the American destroyer, Hopwell, which was patrolling the Taiwan Straits. A flotilla of Communist torpedo boats entered Lialo Bay on the south coast of Quemoy while two GRC landing boats were heading toward shore. The Communist torpedo boats sank one Nationalist ship and damaged the other landing craft. The U. S. destroyer Hopwell was ten miles off Quemoy and radioed for instructions. She was ordered to aid the damaged ships but not to fire on the torpedo boats unless fired upon. The torpedo boats circled the Hopwell and departed.⁷ As a result of this incident U. S. ships were authorized to

drive off or destroy surface craft firing on friendly ships in international waters.⁸

On the 24th the Chinese Communists fired 36,000 rounds of high explosives against the Quemoy complex, and the GRC responded with 8,273 rounds.⁹ The artillery fire, as indicated in Table 14, continued but at a substantially lower rate through the first days of September when there was a temporary cease-fire.

In addition to the exchange of artillery fire the Chinese Communists for the first and only time during the crisis bombed Quemoy, dropping eight 500-pound bombs on the west beaches of Quemoy. Eight Chinese Communist MIG's were involved in the operation, coordinated with the artillery fire.¹⁰

Also on the 24th two night naval engagements took place near Quemoy. The clashes resulted from a Chinese Communist attempt at landing on the small island of Tung-Ting in the Quemoy complex. The first attack involved four Chinese Communist gunboats and six small landing craft while the second involved five Chinese Communist gunboats and thirty motorized junks. According to the GRC Ministry of National Defense, several enemy ships were sunk and the attack was driven off by seven Chinese

Table 14

ARTILLERY FIRE: AUGUST 23 - SEPTEMBER 5

	Chinese Communists	Chinese Nationalists
August 23	40,000	5,200
24	36,000	8,273
25	3,213	5,000
26	3,580	180
27	11,660	0
28	12,730	2,480
29	16,200	2,250
30	400	0
31	800	0
September 1	1,350	3,130
2	1,530	150
3	300	0
4	210	110
5	0	608

SOURCE: Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Office of Intelligence Research and Analysis, Intelligence Report No. 7805, "Chronology of Taiwan Straits Developments, June 30-September 26, 1958," (Prepared by Division of Research and Analysis for Far East), September 29, 1958 (Secret); CINCPAC Historical Division, "CINCPAC Taiwan Diary," August 1958-December 1959 (formerly Top Secret, downgraded to Secret); TDC Daily SITREPS [Situation

Table 14 -- continued

Reports], TDC file #3482 consisting of a daily telegram to CINCPAC, September 3, 1958 to October 17, 1958 (Secret). The three sources give somewhat different figures; where there were differences the CINCPAC figures were used.

Nationalist Patrol craft. The GRC lost one LSM (landing craft, mechanized) and had one LST (landing ship, tank) damaged.¹¹ Prior to September 3, when they were advised of U. S. escort plans, the Nationalists made five attempts to land an LST with troop replacements and several ships. These efforts were turned back by Chinese Communist PT boats and artillery fire.¹²

On the 25th two more air engagements took place, in the first of which eight F-86's opposed 8 MIG's, and 2 MIG's were downed, one destroyed. In the second, 16 F-86's opposed 15 MIG's, and 2 MIG's were destroyed.¹³ Following this there was a slackening in the sea and air activities of the Chinese Communists. In fact, there was not to be another air battle until September 8 nor would there be any further PT boat activities by the Chinese Communists for the rest of August, apparently because of the failure of the Chinese Nationalists to send any ships to Quemoy.*

By the 29th, according to a CINCPAC report, the Chinese Communists had moved at least three (and possibly

*According to one press report, Nationalist efforts to land supplies by ship at night were frustrated by Communist PT boat action.¹⁴ There is no confirmation of this in the classified materials I have seen.

two more) armies into the area opposite Taiwan and had augmented their naval forces. The report stated that there was possibly adequate aircraft for a military operation against Quemoy now assembled opposite the Offshore Islands.¹⁵ The Chinese Communists had also been reported to have occupied a fifth coastal airfield.¹⁶

PROPAGANDA

The Chinese Communist press and radio presented a reasonably accurate description of what was taking place in the Taiwan Straits during late August 1958. The People's Daily of August 24, for example, reported prominently, if briefly, on page one that on the afternoon of the 23rd one supply ship of the Chiang Kai-shek army which was on its way to Quemoy was attacked by Chinese Communist artillery on the Fukien front. A report on page three of the People's Daily noted that a U. S. cruiser had been seen near Quemoy.*¹⁷

On August 25 the People's Daily supplied a more detailed report of the events which had taken place on the 23rd. It repeated that the Chinese Nationalist supply ships had been driven back, but also reported that at

*The "cruiser" may have been the "destroyer" Hopwell referred to above.

5:30 p.m. on the afternoon of the 23rd, the Chinese Communist guns had launched a short attack not only against Chinese supply ships carrying troops to Quemoy but also against the Chinese Nationalist troops on Quemoy. The bombardment was reported to have lasted seventeen minutes and to have scored a hit on a ship in Lialo Bay.*18

On the 26th the People's Daily very prominently reported the action of Chinese Communist torpedo boats and artillery on the Fukien front. It reported that at 3:18 p.m. on the 24th GRC artillery on Quemoy suddenly bombarded coastal islands in the hands of the Chinese Communists in order to cover a GRC ship attempting to enter Lialo Bay. Chinese Communist artillery, the paper stated, attacked the Chinese Nationalist artillery and fired on the ship as well as the supply ship which had been hit on the 23rd and which had remained in the Bay. The second Chinese Nationalist ship was hit and both ships tried to

*Chinese Communist Foreign Minister Chen Yi was reported on August 25 to have made a statement at a diplomatic reception right after the bombardment began, of which conflicting reports reached Western sources. Some claimed to have heard him say, "We have already begun the liberation of Quemoy and Matsu," and others heard, "We are about to liberate the Offshore Islands."19 This is the only diplomatic activity by the Chinese Communists during August in relation to the events in the Taiwan Straits.

escape. The Chinese Communist torpedo boats, according to the People's Daily story, intercepted the ship, damaged one, and sank the other.²⁰ On the same day the People's Daily took note of the Dulles letter to Morgan and denounced it as interference in the internal affairs of China.²¹

Chinese Communist propaganda in the first few days of the intense artillery fire and active PT boat operations avoided any dramatic claims and confined itself to a description of what was taking place in the Taiwan Straits. There was clearly no effort to suggest that a major international crisis had begun or that a threat to the United States had been made: rather the Communist activity was portrayed as a routine outbreak of military action in the continuing civil war.

Soviet propaganda during this period seems to have reflected the same desire to play down the importance of the Chinese Communist military action. For several days the Soviet news media did not report on the events in the Taiwan Straits. The only indirect reference came in a speech by Soviet Premier Khrushchev, which was reportedly delivered on August 13 but not printed in Pravda until August 23. In the speech Khrushchev declared that in

surveying the international scene he saw no developments which could lead to war in the immediate future.²²

The first explicit Soviet commentary on the Quemoy operations occurred on the 27th with the Soviet press citing a TASS (Soviet News Agency) dispatch from London which referred to action by the Chinese Communist shore batteries.²³ A day later on the 28th another Soviet publication was to refer to the Chinese shelling as a punitive retaliation for the attempt by the Chinese Nationalist ships to land supplies on Quemoy.⁴

Izvestia on the 27th referred to the tension in the Far East and attributed it to the U. S. ruling class.

well? It listed a series of "provocative" actions by the United States, including putting arms on Taiwan and helping to reorganize Chiang Kai-shek's armies. It quoted Chiang as saying that preparations were almost complete for a return to the mainland.²⁵ On the following day Moscow Radio blasted the U. S. Far Eastern moves and said the United States had decided that the Offshore Islands were not essential for the defense of Taiwan but that the GRC troops were staying there for political reasons.²⁶

The People's Daily of August 28 reported that the Ministry of National Defense had on the 27th commended

certain units of the Chinese Communist Navy which had distinguished themselves by seriously threatening the sea-line of communication between Quemoy and Taiwan. It called on the sea units to coordinate closely with ground and air forces and to be ready at any time to deal an even greater blow to any attempted Chiang Kai-shek reinforcement.²⁷ Two days later, on the 29th, the Ministry of National Defense commended the artillery units for their activities during the past week. Gunners were cited for their action which prevented the Chiang Kai-shek regime from supplying Quemoy and for the damage which it had done to the military establishment on Quemoy.²⁸

On the 31st Pravda made its first formal comment on the developing situation in the Taiwan Straits. The "observer" article said that the Soviet Union would give Communist China "moral and material aid" and warned that any U. S. aggression would only lead to a spreading of the war. It stated that any threat against the Chinese Communists would be considered a threat against the Soviet Union and it warned the United States against believing that hostilities against China could be localized. The situation was described as an internal affair of the

Beginning on the 27th and continuing in increasing intensity until September 2, Peking Radio in a series of broadcasts only in the Taiwan area called on the Quemoy garrison to surrender. Neither the home nor the international services of the New China News Agency (NCNA) or the Peking Radio carried the broadcast.³⁰ The broadcast on August 29 warned the Quemoy garrison that it was as "hopeless as a pair of turtles entrapped in a flask," and continued:

Chinese Compatriots on Quemoy and Matsu: the day has come for you to be liberated from utter distress. Arise quickly! Do not be fooled by the deceptive propaganda carried out by the traitorous Chiang Kai-shek clique. Arise to welcome the People's Liberation Army and to wipe out the Chiang bandit troops that continue to resist the liberation, so that you will be able to return to the embrace of your fatherland to lead a happy life.

Officers and men of the Chiang armed forces on Quemoy and Matsu: you have come to the critical moment of choice between life and death. Do not continue to stake your lives on the United States and Chiang Kai-shek. There is a road to life open for you -- kill the U.S. advisors and defect to our side. There is no other way out.³¹

On the following days the Communist broadcasts were directed personally to the commanders of the garrisons on Big and Little Quemoy urging them to surrender and promising

them high positions if they did so. The broadcasts warned that the alternative was destruction. The situation on the islands was described as hopeless:

The PLA [People's Liberation Army] air and naval forces are capable of blockading these islands, cutting off all sea and air support by the Chiang armed forces as well as military supplies. All these islands are short of water, food, fuel, and medical supplies, nor will the Chiang troops find any means to replenish the supply of ammunition.³² [Italics added.]

CHINESE COMMUNIST STRATEGY

An assessment of why the Chinese Communists launched a move against the Offshore Islands in August 1958 must begin with a consideration of the mood of the Chinese leadership at this time. Both domestically and in foreign policy, 1958 marked a major turning point in development within Communist China. Domestically, mid-summer of 1958 represented a period of a marked swing to the Left. There was a great confidence on the part of the leadership stemming from their belief, which had probably become firm several years before, that the survivability of a Communist regime in China had been assured by their ability to establish effective control over all the mainland and their elimination of any active opposition from any part of the

population. There was also a certain amount of frustration since the problems of agriculture remained to be solved. It was this combination of confidence and frustration which led the Mao regime to feel that a new and dramatic impetus had to be given to their effort to make China into a great economic power. Thus it was in the spring that Peking announced the "great leap forward" in industry and during the crisis announced the formation of the communes and militia.

In foreign policy there was a similar mixture of confidence mixed with frustration on several key points. On the positive side the Chinese believed that a major shift in the balance of world forces was taking place with the development of Soviet industrial and technological power as represented by the Soviet Sputniks and intercontinental missiles. The Chinese Communists began to talk of the East Wind prevailing over the West Wind and during the Quemoy crisis to resurrect and to stress the paper tiger theme.* They were urging the Soviet Union to be more aggressive in dealing with American and other Western moves throughout the world.

*Just after the crisis the Chinese re-issued a pamphlet, Comrade Mao Tse-tung on "Imperialism and All Reactionaries are Paper Tigers," Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1958.

The Chinese, as well as the Russians, may have been led to believe that there was a reduction in American willingness to defend its interests based on the coming major changes in the military balance of power. In fact, the Soviet move in Berlin several months after the Taiwan Straits crisis (which may in fact have been planned prior to the crisis) probably reflected this belief that, though the military balance of power had not yet changed, American will and determination had changed as a result of the dramatic demonstration of Soviet technological capability, which seemed to promise a forthcoming change in the military balance of power.

Chinese frustration in her foreign policy in 1958 was related to three factors: the growing Sino-Soviet disagreements, the failure of the Bandung spirit and the spirit of the five principles to produce a major shift in the alliance of nations in the Pacific area, and the failure to eliminate the Chiang Kai-shek regime on Taiwan. We now know that the period 1957-58 marked the beginning of the intensification of the Sino-Soviet dispute and the disagreement between Russia and China as to what the meaning was of the changing balance of forces and how hard the Sino-Soviet bloc could push in extending the area of

Communism against Western resistance. The Chinese may have believed that their dispute with the Soviet Union might eventually become apparent to the Western powers and hence damage the credibility of the Soviet deterrent threat against American nuclear attacks on Communist China.

In addition, the growth of the Sino-Soviet dispute could lead to a reduction in Chinese Communist military capability in terms of modern weapons vis-a-vis the Chinese Nationalists, who were continuing to be supplied with new weapons by the United States. Thus the growing Sino-Soviet disagreements created not only frustration but pressure to move before the disagreements became more intense. VN, 1972!

In 1954-55, Chinese Communist foreign policy had swung sharply to the Right with the Chinese participation in the Bandung Conference and the signing of the agreement of five principles of peaceful coexistence with a number of Asian countries. The Chinese Communists may have expected that these agreements would pave the way for increased Chinese Communist influence in these countries and a gradual shifting in the Asian balance of power. By 1958, the Chinese seemed to have become convinced that they had overestimated the efficacy of a soft line and were to adopt a hard line not only in the Taiwan Straits, but in Tibet,

The Chinese continued to be frustrated by their inability to eliminate the Chiang Kai-shek regime on Taiwan and thus to end the long Chinese civil war. With the hopes of a quick capture of Taiwan dashed in 1950 by the American decision to interpose the Seventh Fleet between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland, the Peking regime had been searching for a way to bring down the Nationalist regime and to end the existence of a rival claimant not only to the control of the Chinese mainland but also to recognition by other governments and the United Nations as the government of China. The Peking regime probably believed that morale in Taiwan was at a low point in 1958 because of the great economic and political progress being made on the mainland. The hope of returning to the mainland among Chiang's followers was clearly at a low ebb. In addition, the Chinese Communists may have believed that the American commitment to the defense of the Offshore Islands and of Taiwan had become less firm because of the changing balance of forces. The anti-American riots on Taiwan in 1957 may have led Peking to overestimate GRC-U. S. differences and to feel that these differences could be exploited. If the U. S. stood by and allowed Quemoy to fall, GRC confidence in the U. S. might be shaken to the ..

point that a deal with the mainland began to seem desirable. Finally, the Chinese Communists probably felt that in this period of confidence and of a Left move in foreign policy that they should make some kind of effort to seize their most important foreign policy objective -- Taiwan. It was clear to them that a direct move against Taiwan was not only militarily infeasible, but also very dangerous and hence that the only hope of getting Taiwan was to put pressure on the Offshore Islands.

In addition to capturing Taiwan, the Chinese Communists had shown an interest in driving the United States from the Western Pacific as a whole, and eliminating the United States as a major military and political power in the Asian area. In connection with this, the Chinese Communists had been interested in demonstrating U. S. lack of resolve not only to the Soviet Union but also to countries on the Chinese periphery. Correspondingly, they were interested in demonstrating Chinese Communist military strength, as would be shown by their ability to capture Quemoy, and political will not only to the world at large to establish their claims of being a world power but also to Asian states which they hoped would recognize the need to accept general Chinese Communist political direction.

Basis ?

In order to secure these objectives, the Chinese Communists apparently wanted to undermine the Chiang Kai-shek regime on Taiwan by capturing Quemoy. They hoped to create the possibility of taking over Taiwan by subversion or by a political arrangement with a group which might overthrow Chiang, by capturing the Quemoy Islands on which Chiang had staked much of his prestige and on which he had placed one-third of his combat-ready military forces. Though the U.S. Government and Chiang Kai-shek shared with the Chinese Communists the belief that if Quemoy fell, Taiwan would soon fall by subversion, it is not clear if anybody had a carefully worked out scenario as to how this might take place. On the other hand, the Chinese Communists probably had a general belief that the rapid deterioration of morale on Taiwan which would occur because of the fall of Quemoy and the loss of a large part of the Chinese Nationalist military capability would open the way for subversive moves. It might lead, for example, to a fall from power of Chiang Kai-shek and a seizure of power by other Chinese Nationalist leaders who were willing to make a deal with the Chinese Communist regime. Both before, during and after the crisis, the Chinese Communists were to make overtures to Chiang Kai-shek

as well as to other leaders of the Kuomintang to return to the Fatherland, and to accept positions with the Chinese Communist regime. They were to offer Chiang Kai-shek in the closing days of the crisis a governorship over Taiwan and participation, if he desired it, in the Central Chinese Communist regime. Whether or not they had any particular scenario in mind or any precise plans for subversion on Taiwan after the fall of Quemoy, it was not unrealistic for the Chinese Communists to assume that there was at least a possibility that Taiwan would fall if Quemoy were captured. Given that this was their only hope of capturing Taiwan, the Chinese Communists may have decided that this was a risk worth taking and may in fact have convinced themselves that Taiwan was more likely to fall by subversion than it actually was. However, it must be emphasized that the Chinese Nationalists and Americans on Taiwan shared with the Chinese Communists the belief that the fall of Quemoy might well lead to the fall of Taiwan.

Whether or not the capture of Quemoy would lead immediately to the fall of Taiwan, it would succeed in demonstrating not only to the GRC but to other Asian countries the U. S. lack of willingness and lack of resolve. Though the United States commitment to defend Quemoy had

never been a very precise one, it was felt in at least some countries in Asia, including South Korea, that this was a test of American determination and American will. Certainly the expectation of other Asian countries that the United States would defend what they considered to be their vital interest would have declined substantially had the United States refused to join with the GRC in the defense of Quemoy, and either had insisted upon an evacuation or stood by and allowed a large part of the GRC army to fall to the Chinese Communists.

This probe with the hope of capturing Quemoy was, of course, not without its risks to Peking. However, as will be made clear, Peking recognized and sought to guard against the risks. Not only might it have led obviously to U. S. or GRC retaliation against the Chinese mainland, but it also could have led to a U. S. forced evacuation by the Chinese Nationalists not only of Quemoy but also of the Matsu Islands, thus paving the way for a de facto recognition of a two-China situation by the United States, by the United Nations, and by a number of American allies and neutrals if not by either of the Chinese regimes. The Chinese were to demonstrate later on in the crisis that they were not interested in a negotiated settlement which

would give them control over all the Offshore Islands in return for at least implicit acceptance of a de facto two-China situation. Nevertheless, the Chinese Communists probably felt that this was a risk worth taking in the belief that if the United States forced an evacuation from the Islands, it might well lead to an overthrow of the regime on Taiwan. In addition, there was the possibility that if the United States either stood by and allowed Quemoy to fall or forced an evacuation from it, the Chinese Nationalists would maintain control of Matsu, making a de facto two-China solution less likely. Though the Chinese Communists may not have put great weight on the value of Matsu remaining under Chinese Nationalist control, they probably gave it some consideration, and this plus their general propensity to concentrate on a single area probably accounts for their failure to move simultaneously against Matsu.

Thus, on August 23, the Chinese Communists launched a combined artillery and naval effort designed to blockade Quemoy and force its surrender. The success of the Chinese Communist effort during the next two weeks in blockading Quemoy and preventing any Chinese Nationalist ships from reaching the Offshore Islands (as well as U.S. evaluations

of the effectiveness of a Chinese Communist artillery-PT boat blockade of Quemoy) suggests that the Chinese Communists with the use of their PT boats, and perhaps submarines and mines, as well as their artillery fire, could have successfully cut off Quemoy had the GRC not been aided by the United States in its efforts to resupply the Offshore Islands.

This seems then to have been the basic Chinese Communist strategy with which they began the crisis. The Chinese Communists hoped to isolate and ultimately to capture the Island of Quemoy against a Chinese Nationalist defense. The Chinese Communists probably considered two possible alternatives, both of which depended on the United States not being willing to aid the Nationalist defense of Quemoy. They might have assumed the United States would force the Nationalists to withdraw from Quemoy as they had forced the evacuation of the Tachens in the face of Chinese Communist artillery fire in 1955. Alternatively, the Chinese Communists may have assumed that the United States would either be unsuccessful in forcing the withdrawal or would not try to force the withdrawal and that the GRC would make a major military effort to hold Quemoy without American help. This effort

would ultimately fail, leading to the capture of the Island and the garrison and a heavy morale and political and military loss to the GRC.

The Chinese Communist strategy then fully depended on the hope that the United States would either stay out or would force a Chinese Nationalist withdrawal from Quemoy. There were several reasons why the Chinese Communists may have held to this belief, including the change in the military balance and the U. S. actions in the Middle East.

The GRC's reaction to the Chinese Communist activation of their jet airfield opposite Taiwan may have also given the Chinese Communists reason to hope that the United States would put pressure on the GRC to evacuate the Quemoy Islands or at least would stay aloof. Chiang Kai-shek had made public statements declaring that were the Chinese Communists ever to occupy these airfields, the GRC would be forced to bomb them. In fact, he made no such move and the Chinese Communists may well have attributed this (correctly) to American pressure not to take action against the mainland. In occupying the airfields, the Chinese Communists clearly showed concern with the possibility that they would be attacked; they occupied them slowly,

one at a time, and placed only a small number of planes on each field, so that if there were an attack a large part of their air force would not be destroyed. The absence of Chinese Nationalist attacks on the airfields gave Peking reason to believe that the United States was exercising great restraint on GRC action.

The GRC had been pressing the United States since July, when they had begun to believe that there would be a Chinese Communist probe against the Offshore Islands, for a public American statement that the United States would assist in the defense of Quemoy. As was indicated above, every American official of importance on Taiwan had been approached by his Chinese Nationalist counterpart proposing such a statement, and the GRC Ambassador to Washington had also made some representation to the American Government asking for a public statement. The volume of activity in this regard on Taiwan, including leaks by the GRC, suggests that the Chinese Communists would have become aware of this effort and might have taken the American refusal to give such a statement as a further indication that the U. S. might not be prepared to defend Quemoy.*

*It should be noted that the United States did make a slight increase in its military force and put some

Thus, on balance, the Chinese Communists probably concluded that the possibility of gaining their most important foreign policy objective, Taiwan, was worth the risks involved in their probe. The speed with which, as we shall see, they seemed to have adjusted to its failure suggests that they were somewhat aware of the possibilities that the probe would not succeed.

forces on alert in the Taiwan Straits area in the period prior to the outbreak of the crisis. However, much of this activity was in connection with the moves in the Middle East. Pacific forces went on alert because of the general military activity of the United States, and in fact had gone off alert by mid-August (see Table 9).

CHAPTER IV: THE U. S. DECISION TO ESCORT

Following the White House meeting on August 25, which had authorized a U. S. military build-up in the Taiwan Straits and preparation for escort to the Offshore Islands should that become necessary, the working levels in State, Defense, and CIA continued to grope with the problem of what the Chinese Communist intentions were, and what the proper U. S. response should be. They were confronted with reports from the field (discussed in Chapter II) which indicated that Quemoy might ultimately be successfully blockaded by the Chinese Communists without air action unless the United States aided the Nationalists. It was also reported that the Chinese Nationalists would not accept an indefinite blockade of Quemoy, even if the Islands were not seriously threatened and might at any point, because of declining morale or a desire to expand the conflict, resort to bombing of the mainland. The possibility of an invasion of one or more of the Islands continued to loom as a possibility which required contingency planning. A letter from Chiang to Eisenhower was also to arrive, necessitating a response to his requests for increased American involvement.* It thus became

increasingly clear that more specific high-level decisions were needed.

PLANNING FOR DECISION

On August 27, the Far East Bureau of the Department of State urged the Secretary of State to secure a high-level agreement on the military steps which it believed were necessary to deter Chinese Communist attack on the Offshore Islands. The memorandum noted that the Chinese Communists might not be deterable and that the United States might have to use atomic weapons, perhaps initially only one or two low-yield weapons, on the Fukien airfields to prevent an invasion of Quemoy. However, it warned that more extensive U. S. attacks might be necessary and that SNIE 100-9-58* had predicted that extensive U. S. nuclear attacks would bring a Soviet reaction with nuclear weapons on Taiwan and the Seventh Fleet and possibly against other U. S. forces and bases in the Far East. The memorandum concluded by noting that there was a need to try to avoid nuclear war by detering the Chinese Communists and that therefore the United States should:

*See p. 113.

- (1) provide 8-inch howitzers* or other guns needed for hitting Red shore batteries with high explosives;
- (2) initiate convoy or partial convoy;
- (3) initiate U. S. air drops;
- (4) initiate U. S. air escort;
- (5) plan for conventional attacks on the mainland.

However, the Far East Bureau memorandum cautioned that the Department of Defense had said that it would not consider local defense without the use of nuclear weapons. It was therefore necessary for the President to direct State and Defense to agree on a series of nonnuclear and then limited nuclear moves.¹

Also on the 27th, a series of phone calls took place between Parsons, Dulles, who was still on vacation in Canada, and Acting Secretary of State Christian Herter. In the initial phone conversation between Parsons and Dulles, the Secretary was told that the artillery bombardment had abated considerably and that a letter (quoted

*Although the press was to play up the nuclear capability of the 8-inch howitzers, they were sent to Quemoy to bolster the Nationalist high explosive capability. The 8-inch howitzer is an effective dual capable weapon, but there were no contingency plans during the crisis for delivering nuclear shells with it.

above)* had arrived from Chiang Kai-shek addressed to Eisenhower calling for increased American participation. Parsons told the Secretary that he believed that Chiang was exaggerating the situation and that the United States should not be stampeded into action. Dulles, during a return phone call to Herter, was told by the Acting Secretary that the State Department was evaluating the use of intermediaries but that he did not think it was a good idea. Dulles responded that he thought it might be desirable to use intermediaries. He opposed using Ambassador Thompson in Moscow to send a message, but stated that he was attracted by the idea of asking India to act as an intermediary to transfer a message to the Chinese Communists.²

In addition to his phone conversation with Dulles, Parsons submitted a formal memorandum to the Secretary, recommending actions which should be taken in response to Chiang Kai-shek's letter to Eisenhower. Parsons recommended increased U. S. support in the form of rushing 8-inch howitzers to Quemoy for silencing the shore batteries with high explosives and augmenting amphibious capabilities

*See pp. 152-153.

of the Nationalists plus U. S. convoy or partial convoy and U. S. air escort of convoys.³ In responding to Chiang's letter of the 27th, on the next day, Eisenhower simply wrote that he had received Chiang's important message and appreciated it. He said that he could not give an immediate reply, but that the requests contained in it were being considered (as they were) at the highest levels.⁴

While preparing for a meeting scheduled for August 29 at the White House, the Government in its public statements sought to convey to the Chinese Communists its determination to prevent the fall of Quemoy. On August 27, the President held a press conference at which he declared, in a statement which moved further towards justifying the defense of Quemoy under the authority of the Congressional Resolution, that the Offshore Islands were now more important to the defense of Taiwan than they were three years ago. He said the Offshore Islands had become more important because the Chinese Nationalists had then deployed about a third of their forces to certain of these Islands and that made for a closer interlocking between the defense systems of the Islands and Taiwan itself than was the case before. He refused to speculate on possible defense of the Offshore Islands and said that the Dulles

letter to Representative Morgan was the best thing that could be said at the moment.⁵

The President was asked at his press conference if U. S. commanders in the field had authority to use atomic weapons at their own discretion, and replied that, "It's not possible to use these weapons except with the specific authority of the President." However, he went on to say that he could not remember if there were specific circumstances of self defense in which this prohibition would not apply.*⁶

On the next day the State Department issued another warning to the Chinese Communists which read as follows:

The Department of State has taken note of the broadcast of the Fukien Command of the Chinese Communist Army, rebroadcast by Peiping Radio late yesterday [August 27] in which Peiping states, "The Chinese People's Liberation Army has determined to liberate Taiwan, a territory of the fatherland, as well as the Offshore Islands and the landing on Quemoy is imminent." The fact that the Offshore Islands are related intimately to Taiwan in this Peiping radio threat confirms what Secretary Dulles said in his recent letter to Mr. Morgan, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The Secretary pointed out

{ { { *There were, however, no such circumstances. The President's statement was apparently not a calculated threat.⁷

that the ties between the Offshore Islands and Formosa have become closer, that their interdependence has increased, and that he believed that it would be "highly hazardous" for anyone to assume that if the Chinese Communists were to attempt to change the situation by force and now attack, or seek to conquer these islands, that could be a limited operation.

This direct threat and the massive bombardment of Quemoy come as stark reminders of Peiping's militarism and aggressive expansionism and are in direct contrast to Peiping's repeated professions of peaceful intentions.*8

On the morning of the 28th, a series of internal memoranda were prepared in preparation for a meeting later that day which was to draw up a plan for a meeting with the President on the 29th. An internal State Department memorandum by Green proposed that a series of questions be sent to the Navy for possible answers:

- (1) Is there a pattern of Chinese Communist shelling?
Can they crater the airfields?

*The American press speculated on the basis of the Eisenhower statement at his press conference and the John Foster Dulles letter that the Administration was now committed to the defense of Quemoy and Matsu. It was reported that officials believed that the GRC had put its strength on the Islands to limit U. S. freedom of action.⁹

- (2) Are there U. S. plans to take over the air defense of Taiwan? How effective would this be?
- (3) How can U. S. escort operations be implemented?
- (4) What are the relative capabilities of the latest TAC (Tactical Air Command) aircraft relative to the MIG-15 and 17?
- (5) Do the Chinese Communists depend on Amoy area airfields? If not, could Chinese Communists control the air over the Offshore Islands? Could the fields be taken out with conventional bombs?
- (6) How many military warning steps are there before the United States must begin selective nuclear bombing of airfields?¹⁰

Another State Department memorandum prepared in Chinese Affairs for Robertson reevaluated the question of the defense of the smaller Offshore Islands in addition to Big and Little Quemoy and the five major Matsu Islands. The estimate of the Office of Chinese Affairs was that the loss of the small Islands would not have a serious effect on GRC morale. However, the loss without U. S. reaction might encourage further Chinese Communist probing against the main Offshore Islands and affect morale in the Offshore

Islands because of the uncertainty involved. The memorandum predicted that the GRC would try to defend the smaller Islands but, except possibly for Ta-tan, would not make a major commitment. There had never been, the memorandum noted, a specific U. S. commitment with regard to the small Islands.¹¹

In the Pentagon an internal Navy memorandum was prepared that proposed to the Chief of Naval Operations that he support the State Department suggestion that 8-inch howitzers be rushed to Taiwan. It was noted that Navy forces were already preparing for escort and air defense of Taiwan and it recommended that the GRC be permitted to retaliate with bombing raids on the shore guns.¹²

At the same time the Air Staff was advising the Chief of Staff of the Air Force that it continued to believe that the United States should issue a warning to the Chinese Communists that, unless the present attacks were discontinued, the United States was prepared to participate actively with the GRC by taking retaliatory measures against the source of the attack.¹³

Later in the day (August 28), a meeting was held at the Pentagon in the Office of ~~the~~ Acting Secretary of Defense Quarles, at which were present members of the Joint

Chiefs of Staff as well as Acting Secretary of State Herter and the Acting Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, General Cabell. The meeting was aimed at agreeing on a course of action to be recommended to the President at a meeting to be held on the following day. Admiral Burke presented a paper to the meeting outlining a proposed course of actions in the current "Phase A" situation. He suggested:

- (1) U. S. escort and protection to the Offshore Islands;
- (2) U. S. responsibility for air defense of Taiwan;
- (3) Supply of additional landing craft to the GRC;
- (4) in the event of air attack on the Offshore Islands, the GRC be permitted hot pursuit and bombing;
- (5) U. S. should urge the GRC to increase counter-battery fire, and the United States should provide adequate ammunition;
- (6) U. S. should take all necessary steps to maintain freedom of the seas in the Taiwan Straits.

Quarles contended that the bombardment and harassment of the Offshore Islands would not constitute an attack on Taiwan in terms of existing policy and the Congressional

Resolution. However, if it continued on an intensified scale, this opinion would have to be revised.

Herter expressed concern that the GRC might be trying to involve the United States in military action in the Taiwan Straits before making an all-out effort to cope with the situation by itself. He expressed the need for good intelligence estimates of GRC capabilities. Both Burke and Quarles concurred in the view that the GRC might not in fact be making an all-out effort to resupply the Islands. It was agreed that Chiang Kai-shek should be told that the United States was not then prepared to commit its own forces. The answer to Chiang's letter was to be phrased in a way that avoided a U. S. commitment to defend the Offshore Islands. An attempt was to be made at the same time to avoid a response so negative that Chiang would in desperation bomb the mainland. It was also proposed that an effort be made to put the decisions back in regular channels by having the GRC deal with the U. S. Ambassador in Taipei.

Herter raised the question of sending the 8-inch howitzers for use on Quemoy. John N. Irwin, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, reported that the MAAG/Taiwan had asked for twelve of these,

which would be supplied. He estimated that it would take sixty to ninety days to get them from the United States to Quemoy.

On the question of a GRC air attack in the event that the Chinese Communists commenced bombing of the Islands with land-based aircraft, it was estimated that the GRC had enough planes to engage in hot pursuit and bombing of the mainland fields, but they would have to do so with a large supply of not very effective conventional bombs. Burke observed that the number of planes that the Chinese Nationalists had were limited and that they would suffer heavy losses. Quarles observed that, if the conflict "went beyond bombardment and harassment, we would get into the scrap and go all-out." He urged that the United States publicly draw this line, as well as announcing its willingness to convoy.

The meeting finally considered the question of what further naval action in the form of convoy protection the United States should take. Burke asserted that the United States was ready to escort all the way into the Islands if instructed to defend the Islands with conventional or nuclear weapons. Felt had recommended to Burke that the Smoot proposal to initiate convoy assistance be approved,

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but Felt and Burke both agreed that the Smoot proposal to authorize GRC bombing of the coastal artillery should be rejected at least for the present since it was not clear that such action was necessary to break the blockade.

Burke argued that, if the Chinese Communists continued all-out interdiction, U. S. air would be needed to break the blockade, but felt that at existing levels a U. S. escort could break it. U. S. assurance of support would lead the Quemoy garrison to begin to match the Chinese Communist artillery fire. Burke proposed that the United States first take over responsibility for the air defense of Taiwan in order to enable GRC forces to engage more actively in resupply and defense of the Offshore Islands. If this were not sufficient, then the United States should escort part of the way in and then all of the way in. In this case he warned that the United States must expect some damage from Chinese Communist torpedo boats. Quarles suggested that the United States first escort only in daylight and let the local Commander decide whether to go part of the way in or all of the way in. Burke proposed that perhaps the United States should begin with escort to within twenty miles of the Offshore Islands, but indicated that closer escort would be needed within a few days and

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night escorts might soon be needed. The State Department officials present expressed some hesitation about the increased U. S. participation. Herter pointed to the danger of a possible Chinese Communist simultaneous move against Matsu, and Parsons pointed out that current U. S. activities might be sufficient to deter the Chinese Communists. He noted that the following would soon occur: (1) new Navy activity, (2) more radar tracks as a result of air activity, (3) movement of amphibious equipment from Singapore, and (4) generally more aggressive U. S.-GRC posture.

It was finally agreed at the meeting to recommend to the President that he approve the memorandum presented by Burke. The question of what precise form the escort should take was left up in the air. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were asked to approve a memorandum on this and scheduled a meeting for 7:45 a.m. on the 29th to prepare a paper for a White House meeting at 8:30.¹⁴

The Joint Chiefs of Staff met at 7:45 on August 29, 1958, to discuss further the question of to what extent the United States should convoy. They arrived at the White House meeting at 8:30 a.m. with a draft message embodying the proposals presented by Burke which still left open the precise terms under which the convoy should be

carried out.

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WHITE HOUSE MEETING (AUGUST 29)

At the White House meeting a series of proposed GRC and U. S. actions were discussed. [Quarles pointed out that for the period of no clear attempt to capture the Islands and that, even if the Chinese Communists did try an assault, it would be necessary first to invoke direct U. S. non-nuclear assistance. Eisenhower agreed that the United States should (defer) the use of nuclear weapons even in the event of an assault on the Offshore Islands, and (hoped) that their use would not be necessary at all in this situation. It would not be difficult to identify a massive Chinese Communist action, he continued, and this was not likely without more thorough preparations. Despite Chiang's request, Eisenhower approved hot pursuit only in regard to bombing attacks on the principal Islands.*

There was extensive discussion of the problem of escorting and U. S. participation in GRC convoys. [Eisenhower asked if convoys could cease in the dark, but others at the meeting felt that this would be impossible, Eisenhower envisioned the possibility of U. S. ships firing on shore batteries. He noted that Chiang had made his soldiers

*This was not made clear in passing the authority on the GRC. See p. 209.

hostages on the Island. Burke and Twining agreed and suggested that this was a deliberate design to put pressure on the United States.

Eisenhower, according to the official summary of the meeting, wished to avoid U. S. close-in escort at this stage, but did approve a paragraph authorizing escort as amended to indicate that it should only be to within three miles of the Offshore Islands. He said that the Chinese Nationalist fire should be designed not to protect the smaller Islands but rather to neutralize the shore batteries. He expressed a strong desire to get out of writing letters to Chiang Kai-shek and he urged that the GRC be sure not to lose the main Islands to bombardment alone.¹⁵

The discussion at the White House meeting, according to a telegram later sent to CINCPAC, had identified three possible phases:

Phase I -- No evidence of assault on principal Offshore Islands with the intent to capture. In this case, the United States should furnish materiel and logistic assistance but take no direct action.

Phase II -- Chinese Communists start assault with evident intent to capture one or more principal Offshore Islands. U. S. forces when directed by the

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Joint Chiefs of Staff would directly assist in the defense of the Offshore Islands, including attack on enemy artillery and local airfields. During Phase II, it is anticipated that atomic weapons would not be used.*

Phase III -- Chinese Communists, in the U. S. opinion, extend their attack to Taiwan and the Pescadores.

U. S. would extend action as appropriate.

During all three phases atomic weapons could not be used without the specific authority of the President.

The GRC, the U. S. Commanders were instructed, was not to be told about the use of atomic weapons.¹⁶

The message approved by the President for transmittal to the field authorized the commanders in the area to escort and convoy to within three miles of Quemoy to the extent that GRC forces could not fulfill this task. They were directed to maintain freedom of the sea by actions

*No mention of the three phases occurs in the summary of the meeting prepared by the Department of State. Decisions made by the President a few days later suggest that he accepted the probable need to use nuclear weapons in the indicated Phase II. It is not clear what the statement "it is anticipated that atomic weapons would not be used" was intended to convey but it did contribute to the feeling in the field that Washington was contemplating a large-scale conventional war.

confined to international waters. The Taiwan Defense Command was authorized at his discretion to assume responsibility for the air defense of Taiwan. In the event of a Chinese Communist air attack against Quemoy and Matsu, GRC aircraft were assumed to have the right to pursue, i.e., to follow aircraft to bases and "attack aircraft at those bases."* Smoot was also instructed to make clear to the GRC that the United States did not share the notion of the inevitability of the loss of the Islands by bombardment. He was informed that the shipment of twelve 8-inch howitzers was being expedited, including six with conventional ammunition from Okinawa.**

*This was in contrast to U. S. planes which had only the right of hot pursuit over the mainland in certain situations but which could not bomb the mainland without Presidential approval.

**The press the next day was able to report very little of what had occurred at the White House meeting. In fact, The New York Times, for example, noted only that Eisenhower had conferred with Herter on the military situation in the Far East and the shelling of Quemoy.¹⁷ Chalmers M. Roberts in the Washington Post was able to report new indications that Eisenhower would help if the Chinese Communists attacked Quemoy and Matsu. Speculation was that the GRC would be allowed to bomb Communist China if an all-out attack on Quemoy took place, and that then the United States would follow with bombing raids on the Chinese mainland. Roberts reported correctly that, though the Chiefs of Staff view the Offshore Islands as unimportant militarily, they are prepared to defend them.¹⁸

By the end of August, the press was beginning to reflect the deep concern which U. S. officials were beginning

The President and his advisors in making the decision at this meeting to authorize escort to within three miles of Quemoy and to permit U. S. assumption of responsibility for air defense of Taiwan, as well as authorizing the GRC to attack bases on the mainland in the event of an air attack against the Offshore Islands, acted in response to these and other requests from Chiang Kai-shek and American officials in the field. In addition to requesting convoy all the way in to the Offshore Islands, Chiang also asked for a public statement by the United States that an attack on Quemoy would constitute an attack on Taiwan, which would be resisted by the United States. Drumright, Smoot and Felt had all concurred in the proposal for a public U. S. statement and had urged convoy all the way in. The officials on Taiwan, Smoot and Drumright, had joined GRC officials in urging that the Chinese Nationalists be given permission then to attack the mainland artillery positions. However, Felt had advised that he did not think this was necessary as yet.

to feel that the Chinese Communists would in fact seek to invade some of the smaller Offshore Islands, and that there was now deep concern about the possibility of large-scale hostilities with the Chinese Communists.¹⁹

In deciding how to react to these suggestions for additional action, American officials were confronted with several possible dangers and lines of action to meet them. Reports from the field, as well as the Special National Intelligence Estimate, had indicated that both an invasion of Quemoy and a successful interdiction were possibilities and therefore action was needed to deal with both contingencies. In devising a course of action, American officials felt considerable restraint from the Formosa Congressional Resolution. They felt that this Resolution specifically made it impossible for the United States to comply with the request that it issue a formal statement that it would defend Quemoy from attack. It was felt that this statement could only be issued after an attack had begun and the judgment could be made that it somehow did threaten the security of Taiwan. Thus despite the fact that a preliminary decision to defend the Offshore Islands had been made several days previously and more detailed plans would be approved within a few days, top American civilian officials agreed unanimously that they could not issue a public statement.

Also influencing a decision on the possibility of a statement of any kind or even a significantly greater U. S.

See Pearl Harbor
NSC-68 (for Korea)
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(name for "power")
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involvement was the dispute among U. S. officials as to whether or not the Chinese Nationalists were making less than an all-out effort on their own to resupply the Islands. A number of officials in Washington, including Herter, Burke, Quarles, and Twining believed that there was at least a strong possibility that the Nationalists were dragging their feet.* Other officials, while doubting that this was the case, were nevertheless prepared to try a limited U. S. involvement to see whether it would be sufficient to break the blockade.

In considering what was necessary to deter a Chinese Communist invasion, American officials believed that a determined show of American strength and American involvement would accomplish this purpose. A number of steps had been authorized to augment the U. S. military presence in the Taiwan Straits and to increase GRC and American strength in the area. It was hoped that these efforts plus the U. S. involvement in the convoy operations would be sufficient to deter an attack, although planning was to proceed on what should be done in the event that the Chinese Communists could not be successfully deterred.

*Smoot was also to come to this conclusion fairly early in the crisis, but he was never to convey this belief to [unclear].

In considering what should be done to alleviate the interdiction, American officials were, as indicated, split on the question of whether anything but a more determined effort by the GRC was necessary. Nevertheless it was agreed that the United States would assist in convoy operations insofar as militarily necessary and to within three miles of Quemoy. The question of how far in the United States should escort aroused considerable debate and disagreement among officials and was the only point in which an agreed recommendation was not presented to the President. In discussion at the White House meeting, Eisenhower was clearly hopeful of devising a plan which would minimize the risk of direct military action between the United States and Chinese Communist forces. Thus he had hoped that convoy could be less than all the way into the beaches and could be limited to daylight operations. While he was to be persuaded during the meeting that nighttime operations would be necessary, he finally decided that escort should be limited to three miles of Quemoy.

There were apparently several reasons for this decision, not the least important was the legal question of not entering the territorial waters of Quemoy. It was the view of American officials that to enter the territorial

waters during military operations would be to imply a commitment to defend the Islands which in turn would imply that the Formosa Resolution had been invoked. Thus, given that they were not prepared to invoke the Resolution, some officials felt that escorting beyond three miles was not possible. In addition, most U.S. ships which would be involved in the escort could not get any closer than three miles to Quemoy and it was believed that escort to this point would be sufficient to protect against most Communist PT boat action and should enable successful escort operations. In addition, all but one or two of the Chinese Communist guns had ranges which would not have enabled them to reach American ships which were beyond the three-mile limit from Quemoy. Thus, for a variety of reasons, it was agreed that escort would be kept to within three miles of the Islands with the feeling that this should be sufficient to enable successful resupply.

In this second White House meeting, the American Government moved further towards a complete involvement in the defense of Quemoy, while avoiding a public statement because of domestic (legal) and (political) pressures. The United States undertook to assist substantially in the effort to break the blockade while attempting to deter an invasion

attempt by a show of American military strength. The decision which remained to be taken was on what precisely the United States would do in the event of an invasion, and it was to this task that American planners were in turn following the White House meeting on the 29th.

The proposal that the GRC be authorized to bomb artillery positions on the mainland was turned down on grounds that it was unlikely to be successful in neutralizing the artillery fire and that it might lead to a substantial expansion of the war if the Chinese Communists reacted by bombing Quemoy or Taiwan. The recommendation was seen largely as being an attempt to improve GRC morale by not leaving them seemingly in a position of simply standing by and allowing the artillery fire to go on. It was felt, however, that the other moves that were being authorized would at least for the time being be sufficient to overcome any danger of a collapse in morale on Quemoy.

IMPLEMENTING WHITE HOUSE DECISIONS

Following the White House meeting, JCS message #947298 was sent to TDC and CINCPAC embodying the agreed instructions and advising them that these decisions had resulted from a White House meeting on August 29, 1958, in response to a request from Chiang Kai-shek.²⁰

An operational message went from the CNO to CINCPAC authorizing escort to the five Matsus and Big and Little Quemoy.²¹ Just a few hours later, in the early hours of August 30, it was relayed by CINCPAC to the CINCPAC Fleet²² and then passed to Carrier Task Force 72 of the Seventh Fleet which had been created for operations involving the current crisis.²³ In a message to the Taiwan Defense Command on September 1, CINCPAC ordered U. S. escorts to avoid shore batteries if possible but indicated that they should fire if fired upon while moving out of range. Felt noted that the JCS had been given wide latitude and that it therefore was necessary to use strength with the finest judgment possible and not engage in moves which could be construed as offensive actions by the United States.²⁴

The Task Force ships were ordered in line with the original CNO to CINCPAC message to provide convoy protection and escort to GRC supply ships to Quemoy and Matsu up to three miles and to the extent that the GRC could not perform the task alone.²⁵

The Commander of the Seventh Fleet, in a message to all his subordinate forces on September 2, gave them permission to give all possible support in protecting Chinese Nationalist ships whether attacked by surface, air or

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subsurface in international waters. They were warned, however, not to provoke fire or invite exchanges with shore batteries. The message concluded: "Remember, the shot you fire will be heard around the world, maybe in the floor of the U. N., be right; however, the objective is to get the supplies through."²⁶

Simultaneously with the order to the Pacific Fleet authorizing it to engage in convoy operations, CINCPAC authorized CINCPACAF to undertake the air defense of Taiwan and to attack any air forces making hostile moves. Hot pursuit was authorized as well as hot chase to enemy territory but not retaliatory attacks.²⁷ PACAF in turn passed the message to its subordinate commanders informing them that the possibility existed that the United States might, at least initially, employ only non-nuclear munitions.

They were ordered to be prepared to use HE against coastal air bases and other targets which posed an invasion threat. The commanders were assured that expansion of operations into China would involve the use of nuclear weapons.²⁸

Smoot reported on September 2 that in order to assume responsibility for the air defense of Taiwan he needed one all-weather squadron in south Taiwan and one in the north as well as additional communication facilities. He informed

CINCPAC that these would be available on September 9 and that he would approach the GRC on the 12th.

Also following the White House meeting on the 29th, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed that CASF XRAY TONGO, a TAC mobile unit, be deployed to Taiwan.²⁹

On August 31 Drumright and Smoot met with Chiang to inform him of the decisions reached as a result of his letter to Eisenhower. On the basis of JCS #947298

Smoot outlined the American position as follows:

In the event that the Chinese Communists launch air attacks on the Kinmen [Quemoy] or Matsu Islands and such attacks are met by GRC aircraft, the Government of the United States would consider that the GRC's inherent right of self-defense would include GRC air attacks on Chinese Communist aircraft conducting such attacks and that the right to pursuit exists [sic.]. In other words, GRC aircraft would be justified in following Chinese Communist aircraft to their bases and attacking aircraft at these bases.³⁰

This presentation slurred over the question of what islands were in the Quemoy group and did not specify, as the President had indicated at the White House meeting, that hot pursuit should refer only to the bombing of Big Quemoy and Little Quemoy, and not to attacks on the smaller islands which Chiang considered a part of the Quemoy complex.

Nevertheless, the message conveyed to him was one that he

could interpret, and probably in good faith did interpret, as authorizing hot pursuit for air attacks on Erh-tan or Tan-tan. Had air attacks occurred against these Islands, it seems clear that Chiang would have ordered retaliation against the mainland with the feeling that he had received authority from the United States to do so.

During the meeting Chiang, according to Drumright, expressed deep disappointment at the non-concurrence by Eisenhower in his request for retaliatory acts against the mainland. His reaction was described as violent and he was reported to have said that he could not accept limitations on the right of self-defense. He still wished, he said, not to take action without U. S. concurrence and hoped for a positive response within three days. Drumright in reporting this said that he felt that a personal letter from Eisenhower to Chiang would be useful.³¹ However, as was noted, Eisenhower had expressed strong distaste for personal communications between himself and Chiang Kai-shek.

The Drumright telegram had expressed the view that the Quemoy defenders might be strangled and CINCPAC, in a message commenting on the Drumright telegram, concurred in this assessment. Felt noted that the situation was virtually at Phase II of JCS #947298 and recommended that he be authorized

to provide escort and air cover into the territorial waters of Quemoy, and up to each coast and beach to insure that the supplies landed. He felt that the Chinese Communists should be informed in advance of this and that he would interpret his orders and issue instructions to neutralize any Chinese Communist interference whatever in the accomplishment of this mission.³² Thus neither the GRC nor American officials in the field were satisfied and were to continue to press for a U.S. escort all the way to Quemoy and for authority to bomb the mainland.